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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/CE

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SUBJECT: First German "Jamaica" Coalition Government Takes
Office

1.(SBU)Summary: Saarland's Jamaica coalition is writing political history in Germany. The first German three-party "Jamaica" coalition government made up of Christian Democrats (CDU), Free Liberals (FDP) and the Green Party was sworn into office on November 10 in Saarland. Incumbent Minister President Peter Mueller (CDU) remains in office with the FDP and Green parties each getting two ministries. Potential governing challenges lie in how the State will vote in future Bundesrat sessions. Left Party Caucus Chief, Oskar Lafontaine, is not expected to play a strong role in the opposition, since his interests are more national in scope and he is reported not to be in good health. Germany's political establishment remains intrigued by the viability of a "Jamaica" coalition option. Saarland will therefore be closely observed to see if this political development at the state level has potential implications for national politics. End Summary.

JAMAICAN OPTIMISM PREVAILS

12. (SBU)Minister-President Peter Mueller and his ministers were in high spirits when they were sworn in on November 10 with 27 of the 41 Parliamentary seats occupied by members of the CDU-FDP-Green coalition government (26 seats is a majority). "This is a project that will influence the political landscape far beyond Saarland," said Mueller. FDP Chairman Christoph Hartmann stressed that the new government is a "huge success in the FDP's history." CDU Parliamentarian Roland Theis, however, noted that Saarland provided a unique venue for this "experiment" since the state's small size meant that personal connections between politicians (and the population in general) made them more willing to work with non-traditional political partners.

13. (SBU)The Green Party was very content with achieving 5.9 percent of the vote in the August 30 election. They will control two ministries -- including the Ministry of the Environment - the same number as the FDP, which had 11.9 percent of the vote. The Greens prevailed on core issues within the coalition agreement, with the CDU and FDP agreeing with the government's pre-2000 nuclear decommissioning agreement. (Note: This conflicts with the CDU/CSU-FDP national coalition agreement. End note.) The coalition agreement also calls for the elimination of fees for university students. Green Party members denied that they had become too centrist by joining a coalition with the CDU and FDP. Green parliamentarian Markus Schmitt was visibly upbeat when he said that "the Green Party is left, right and in the middle. The time of putting the Greens in one corner is over." For Georg Jungmann, deputy caucus chief of the CDU, the Green party has now achieved a centrist "power position" able to form coalitions with the left or the right.

OPPOSITION STILL REGROUPING

4.(SBU)Heiko Maas, head of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and now opposition leader in the State Parliament, was visibly disturbed by the November 10 ceremony. He left the parliament shortly after the

ceremony and declined to comment to the media. Cornelia Hoffmann-Bethscheider, deputy caucus chief of the SPD, told Consulate representatives that the Green Party's Chairman Hubert Ulrich had planned the Jamaica coalition from the start and was never really open to a SPD-Green-Left Party coalition (so-called Red-Red-Green). Left Party parliamentarian Barbara Spaniol echoed this sentiment. However, Spaniol said that the Left Party did not need the Greens anyway and is looking forward to keeping the new governing coalition on its toes by working in opposition to them.

5.(SBU)Oskar Lafontaine, Left Party Caucus Chief in Saarland and co-chair of the national party, was not present for the ceremony as he was in Berlin for Chancellor Merkel's Bundestag speech. One CDU and one SPD source told Consulate Representatives that they expect Lafontaine to leave the Left caucus sometime next year since Lafontaine's health is not good. They also indicated that Lafontaine might retire from politics in the not too distant future, although specifics were lacking.

CONSEQUENCES FOR FEDERAL POLITICS

¶6. (SBU) The three-party Jamaica coalition government may prove challenging for future votes in the Bundesrat where Saarland has three votes. These votes must (by law) always be submitted as a block. If required to vote on an issue in the Bundesrat where the CDU/FDP and Greens do not traditionally agree, such as nuclear power plant decommissioning, it is unclear how Saarland will vote. Mueller, who will lead the Bundesrat delegation, will be bound by his Jamaica coalition agreement to vote against any effort by the federal CDU and FDP government to extend the timeline for

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decommissioning German nuclear power plants. As it seems unlikely that he will vote against his own CDU federal party, Saarland may be forced to abstain in such a vote. Subsequently, if coalition governments start abstaining from votes in the Bundesrat due to similar concessions made in state-level coalition governments, this will provide new challenges overall in governance in Germany.

¶7. (SBU) Comment: The first three-party coalition government in Germany's history may be a necessary consequence of the emerging five party system in Germany, but it is too early to know if this trend will continue. Equally interesting is whether the Green Party will continue to serve as the "kingmaker" in future coalition negotiations, given that they are able to work with both sides of the political spectrum. With the Greens aligned with the CDU and FDP, the Saarland SPD faces an unclear future as it may have lost its "natural" coalition partner. End Comment.

¶8. (U) This cable has been coordinated with US Embassy Berlin.

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